

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Matador – Ruby Range Stock Water Well Project 2018
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring to Summer, 2018
Proponent:	Matador Ranch, Kyle Hardin - Manager
Location:	T9S R7W Sec. 18 and T9S R8W Sec. 13
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The DNRC received an improvement request form from Kyle Hardin, manager for Matador Cattle Company to construct a stock water development on two adjacent Montana State Trust Land Sections. The proposed project is located in the Southern Ruby Mountains area of Beaverhead County. The development would include drilling a well located on State Trust Land in the NESESE of Section 18, T9S R7W. A stock tank is proposed near the well site. Approximately 1¼ miles of 1¼ - 1½” plastic pipe would be buried through the S½S½ of Section 18 and into the N½SE¼ of Section 13, T9S R8W. A second stock tank would be placed at the end of the buried pipeline in the NWSE of Section 13.

The purpose of the project is to provide water to an area that currently does not have dependable surface water available. The affected tracts include T9S R7W Sec. 18 and T9S R8W Section 13. Aerial photographs depicting the project have been included with this environmental assessment.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Dean Waltee, Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Wildlife Biologist
Patrick Rennie, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Archaeologist
Montana Natural Heritage Program
Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

No other governmental agencies with jurisdiction or additional permit requirements were identified during the scoping for this proposed project. The project as proposed would involve only Montana Trust Land allocated to Common Schools Grant.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

- Alternative A:** No action alternative. The proposed project would not be approved.
- Alternative B:** Preferred alternative. To allow drilling of the well with associated buried pipeline and two stock water tanks.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain **POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS** following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

4. **GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:**

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Construction of the proposed project would include a well drilling rig while a vibra-shank ripper on a dozer, an excavator, or a backhoe may be required to bury the line with minimal soil disturbance. The disturbed area around the stock tank sites would have rock placed as needed around them to prevent erosion and reduce trampling impacts. No long term cumulative impacts to soils in the project area are expected as a result of this project.

5. **WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:**

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

No surface water resources are located within the project area. These tracts are part of a large block of Trust Land with few springs or seeps to provide for livestock use and distribution. The project could improve water quantity and improve cattle grazing distribution on this upland area of the Ruby Mountains.

6. **AIR QUALITY:**

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Air Quality would not be affected by this project.

7. **VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:**

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Cover, quantity, and quality of vegetative communities would not be significantly affected by this project due to the low amount of disturbance and use of low impact equipment.

8. **TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:**

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The project could increase the availability of water for livestock and wildlife. Construction practices used in the placement of the pipeline and stock tanks would include rocking tank sites as necessary. Escape ramps would be placed in tanks for birds and small mammals.

9. **UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

The Montana Natural Resource Information Service (NRIS) website was queried for information regarding sensitive or endangered species located in the vicinity of the project area. The query results are listed below:

Sage Grouse – (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – Sage grouse have been listed as a species of concern with a Montana State sage grouse management plan in effect. The project is located outside of identified sage grouse core habitat. DFWP wildlife biologist Dean Waltee was solicited for comments on the project. He did not have concerns with the proposed project. There will be escape ramps installed on the stock tank to allow sage grouse and other birds and small wildlife to climb out of the tank if they fall in.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was solicited for comment. He had no cultural resource concerns with the proposed project.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The project is not located on a prominent topographic feature and will not alter aesthetics of the area.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No demands for additional environmental resources are required for this project. No cumulative effects to environmental resources should result from this project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

No other studies, plans, or projects were identified during the scoping for this project.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No health or safety risks are posed by the project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

If approved, this project is designed to provide more reliable water sources and improve access to water. Current water sources in the area are in the form of small seasonal seeps and springs in the bottom of drainages. Stock tanks would reduce impacts to drainages by providing accessible water on upland sites in the spring and improve livestock use and distribution on the surrounding Trust Land.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The project will not create or eliminate permanent jobs in the area.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No significant increase in tax revenues are expected as a result of this project.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services.

No increased demand for government services are expected as a result of this project.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

No locally adopted environmental plans will be affected by this project.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This project will not negatively alter recreational activities in the area. The improved access to upland water sources resulting from the completion of the project may increase use of this area by wildlife, enhancing recreational opportunities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

No change in population will result from this project.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No change in social structures and mores are expected as a result of this project.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The action affects water availability in an otherwise dry area. The increased water availability should increase both livestock distribution and wildlife use of the upland areas.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The return to the Common Schools Trust for this project cannot be measured in dollars received. No additional revenue is expected to result from this project as the animal unit months (AUM's) are calculated on a forage production basis. The lessee is expected to harvest that forage and use the AUM's by fencing, placing improvements, and/or herding their livestock. The lessee's well drilling, stock water pipeline, and tank project would increase the overall value of the lease by creating a long-term water source on the affected sections and adjacent Trust Land.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Charles Maddox	Date: 4/16/2018
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B: Preferred alternative. To allow drilling of the well with associated buried pipeline and two stock water tanks.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No long-term impacts are anticipated from this proposal. The new well and stock tanks will help disburse livestock over the track and result in better utilization of the range resources.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Timothy Egan	
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	
Signature: /S/ Timothy Egan		Date: May 21, 2018